winter solstice, there is held in the ancestral temple a major ceremony, with a sacrifice. The custom is supposed to go back to pre-Confucian times and its ritual to be of great antiquity. Its perpetuation has formed part of the tradition of the Confucian school. A similar sacrifice may be held on the occasion of a funeral. The clan takes the opportunity of the annual ceremony to meet and transact business. A hall in the temple may be used for a school, and the temple, too, may become a court of justice in which the clan pronounces judgment on one of its members.

Many other practices have been connected with the cult of ancestors. About New Year's time the dead may be welcomed to the homes from the ancestral temples and then, a few days later, be formally sent back to their customary abodes. At Ch'ing Ming, the great spring festival, the graves are cleaned and repaired and offerings made of food and incense. Other occasions, such as the birthday of the deceased, may also be commemorated by a special ceremony and offering.

It can readily be seen that the cult of progenitors has had important social results. It has formed a bulwark of that outstanding social and economic unit, the family, it has made for the conservation of much of the past, it has been a means of moral and social control, and it has acted as a check on individualism. As a factor in molding Chinese life and thought, it can hardly be exaggerated.

BUDDHISM

As we have seen, ever since the T'ang Buddhism in China has been suffering from a slow decline. Up to the very present, however, it has continued to have a prominent place in die life of the country. Its monasteries and shrines are still numbered by the

tens of thousands. In Hangchow alone (one of the strongest Buddhist centers, to be sure, and hence not typical) a survey made in 1930-1931 disclosed the existence of nearly a thousand of them. It has been almost inextricably intertwined with folklore and with much of literature and art.

Through the interpenetration of religions by one another and the eclecticism so characteristic of China, the Chinese who can be called exclusively Buddhist have been almost entirely confined to the ranks of the professionals—the monks and the nuns.